

Applicants' invention as set forth in Claim 1 relates to a process for forming images comprising the steps of conducting recording on a recording medium with an image receiving layer, and laminating a laminating film comprising a thermoplastic film without a backing layer onto the image receiving layer and smoothing a surface of the thermoplastic film by heating and pressurizing means to bond a back side of the thermoplastic film onto the image receiving layer.

Claim 6 is directed to an apparatus for forming images, and includes an ink-jet head for recording on a recording medium, and a laminate section for laminating a laminating film comprised of a thermoplastic film without a backing layer onto the recording medium on which recording has been conducted. In addition, heating and pressurizing means smooths the thermoplastic film by heating and pressurizing and bonds a back side of the thermoplastic film onto the image receiving layer.

In accordance with Applicants' claimed invention, a laminating film featuring a thermoplastic film without a backing layer is used for lamination. In this manner, a simple and economical laminating function can be performed.

The primary citation to Nakazawa relates to a laminating apparatus that includes a laminate film feeder for feeding laminate films to laminate a recording medium. As indicated in the Office Action, Nakazawa includes pressure rollers 40a and 40b that include laminate heaters 44a and 44b (see Figure 1) for applying the laminate films to the recording medium.

In contrast to Applicants' claimed invention, however, Nakazawa does not teach or suggest using a laminating film comprised of a thermoplastic film without a backing layer. Instead, Nakazawa uses a conventional two-layer laminate film (see column 12, line 46-52), and in this regard is no different from the two-layer laminate films shown in prior art Figures 3A-3C of the subject application.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of Claims 1 and 6 under 35 U.S.C. §102 or §103 is respectfully requested.

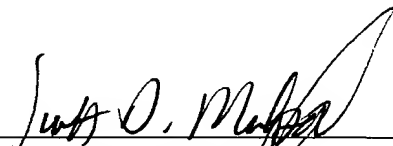
The secondary citation to Yamamoto relates to a hot press device and was cited for its teaching of providing gloss to a print. Ogawa is directed to an ink-jet recording sheet and was also cited for its teaching of providing a gloss to the sheet. Finally, JP '949 relates to a printing film and was cited for its teaching of a laminate having a resin layer and an adhesive layer. These citations fail, however, to compensate for the deficiencies in Nakazawa as discussed above with respect to independent Claims 1 and 6. Accordingly, without conceding the propriety of modifying Nakazawa in the manner proposed in the Office Action, it is submitted that such combinations still fail to teach or suggest Applicants' claimed invention. Therefore, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections applied to Claims 2-5 are respectfully requested.

Accordingly, it is submitted that Applicants' invention as set forth in Claims 1 and 6 is patentable over the cited art. In addition, dependent Claims 2-5 set forth additional features of Applicants' invention. Independent consideration of the dependent claims is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, reconsideration and allowance of this application is deemed to be in order and such action is respectfully requested.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE TO CLAIMS

1. (Amended) A process for forming images comprising the steps of:  
conducting recording on a recording medium provided with an  
image-receiving layer; and  
laminating a laminating film comprising a thermoplastic film without a  
backing layer onto [said] the image-receiving layer [to smooth the] and smoothing a surface of  
[said] the thermoplastic film by heating and pressurizing means [and] to bond [the] a back side of  
[said] the thermoplastic film onto [said] the image-receiving layer.
2. (Amended) A process for forming images as set forth in Claim 1,  
wherein [the] a surface glossiness of [said] the heating and pressurizing means is equal or greater  
than 10% at an incident angle of 20°.
3. (Amended) A process for forming images as set forth in Claim 2,  
wherein [said] the surface glossiness is equal or greater than 70% at an incident angle of 75°.
4. (Amended) A process for forming images as set forth in Claim 1,  
wherein either [the] a glass transition point of [said] the thermoplastic film is lower than [the] a  
glass transition point of a binder resin in [said] the image-receiving layer or [the] a film-forming  
temperature of [said] the thermoplastic film is lower than [the] a film-forming temperature of a  
binder resin in [said] the image-receiving layer.

5. (Amended) A process for forming images as set forth in Claim 1, wherein [said] the thermoplastic film is a laminate of two or more thermoplastic polymer layers.

6. (Amended) An apparatus for forming images comprising:  
an ink-jet head for [conducting] recording on a recording medium;  
a laminates section for laminating a laminating film comprised of a thermoplastic [polymer] film without a backing layer onto [a] the recording medium on which recording has been conducted; and  
heating and pressurizing means for smoothing [said] the thermoplastic film by heating and pressurizing and [for] bonding [the] a back side of [said] the thermoplastic film onto [said] the image-receiving layer.